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The River Road (Pictorial)
The Howling Dog
The Message
and much more. . .

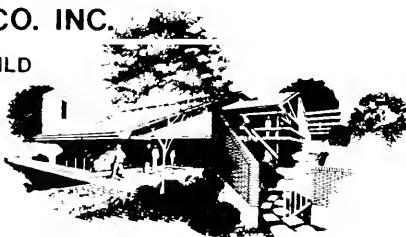
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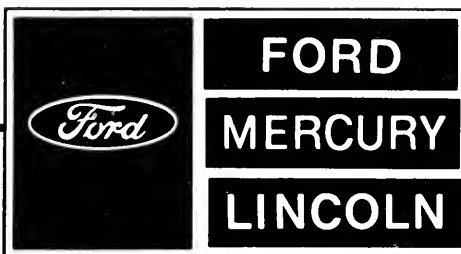
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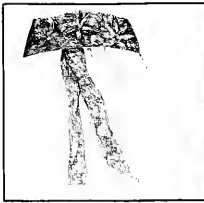
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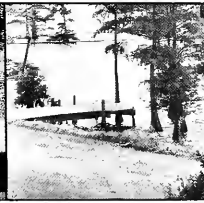
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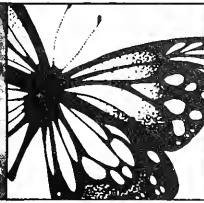
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Cover Photo: Only the very southern tip of the Delta is draped with Spanish moss. The greenish-gray tendrils reach down as though to stop the wanderer or intruder. One can imagine an eerie creature from the past watching from its shadows even though the sun is shining through it.

Photo by: Virginia Rayner

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— Spring Events —

APRIL

Portraits and Oils, exhibited by Billie Joanne Springer, Robinson-Carpenter Library, Cleveland.

Paintings by Glennray Tutor, Carnegie Public Library, Clarksdale.

April 4-6

"Gold in the Hills," hilarious melodrama presented by Dixie Showboat Players, Parkside Playhouse, Vicksburg, 636-0471.

April 4-27

Craft show, Old Court House Museum, Vicksburg, 636-1012.

April 7

Greenville Symphony Concert, featuring guest conductor Vincent De Frank for young artists series, High School Auditorium, 335-5231.

Selections from the Hallmark Photographic Collections, Atrium, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

April 9

Bruce Livingston Piano Concert, 7:30 p.m. Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. His program will include selections from Chopin, Beethoven, Scarlatti, and Liszt.

April 7, 10, 17, 24

Art Adventure Series — "The Looking Glass: What Do You See?" held in conjunction with **FACES: Selections from the Hallmark Photographic Collection.** Lewis West: Stone Carver, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

April 13

World Catfish Festival, catfish fry, eating contest, selection of queen, arts & crafts, 10 K race, live entertainment; Courthouse lawn and surrounding area, Belzoni, 247-2915 or 247-2616

April 14

Southern Watercolor Society Exhibition, East Left, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

Renaissance Spring Campus Concert, Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland.

April 15

Renaissance Spring Campus Concert, Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland.

April 16

Chamber Music Recital, 8:00 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland.

April 18

Choral Union Mozart Requiem, 8:00 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland.

April 21

Awards Reception for Cottonlandia Art Competition, 2-5 p.m., Cottonlandia Museum, Greenwood, 453-0925.

April 28

POPS IN HARTY PARK, featuring Greenville Symphony, picnic on the grounds, Harty Park, Greenville, 335-5231.

MAY

Weaving Exhibit by Barbara Moore, Robinson-Carpenter Library, Cleveland.

Semi-finalists and finalists in Cottonlandia Art Competition to be shown at Cottonlandia Museum, Greenwood.

Photography by Millie Moorhead, Carnegie Public Library, Clarksdale.

May 1, 8, 15

Museum School Art History Class: Understanding Modern Art, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

May 1-4

Spelling Bee, grades 1-6, Greenville Mall, Greenville.

May 3

First Friday Film Club "Wuthering Heights," Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

May 11

Mainstream Arts and Crafts Festival, Washington County Courthouse Lawn, Greenville.

May 12

Richard Lindner: Print maker (MMA Collections), Graphic Study Center, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

May 19

Robert Hubbard, Parchman Prison Series, Atrium, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

May 25

Community Fair Day for area organizations and clubs, Greenville Mall, Greenville.

Annual Crosstie Arts Festival, exhibits, crafts, entertainment, Courthouse lawn, Cleveland.

May 30

Flower Group, Mississippi Gallery, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

JUNE

Watercolor Exhibit by Terry Cherry, Robinson-Carpenter Library, Cleveland.

June 7

First Friday Film Club: "Casablanca," Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

Chinese Papercuts, East Left, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

June 10-14

Art Day Camp, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

June 16

Multi-media Artwork Show by Dr. Bobby Harper, of Hattiesburg; reception, Cottonlandia Museum, 2-5 p.m., Greenwood.

June 24-29

Presidential Display, Greenville Mall, Greenville.

Continuing Events

The Burrus House — Hwy. 448, ½ mile east of Benoit, MS, 742-3425. Built ca. 1858 by one of the earliest settlers in Bolivar County. Open by appointment. Admission.

Archaeological Museum —

Carnegie Public Library, 114 Delta Ave., 624-4461, Clarksdale, MS. Collections include rudimentary Mississippi pottery and other related artifacts, research materials, and periodic changing art exhibits. Open year round. Free.

Delta Blues Museum — 1109 State Street, Clarksdale, MS, 624-4156. Dedicated to the history and influence of the blues and its artists. Open seasonally and by appointment. Free.

Weatherbee House — 238 Belmont Drive, Greenville, MS, 387-2538, 332-8148. Changing art exhibits in restored late 19th century cottage. Open year round. Wednesday 1-3 and by appointment. Admission.

Cottonlandia Museum — Greenwood, MS, 453-0925. Regional historical museum depicting history of the Delta over the past 10,000 years. Open year round except holidays, Tuesday - Friday 9-5, Saturday - Sunday 2-5. Free.

Florewood River Plantation State Park — Greenwood, MS, 455-3821, 455-3822. Offers traditional museum displays and living history presentations of the lifestyle typical of antebellum cotton plantations. Museum open year round; plantation open March - November, except holidays; Tuesday - Saturday 9-5, Sunday 1-5. Admission.

Winery Rushing — Merigold, MS, 748-2731. Includes 25 acres of vineyards and Mississippi's first winery since Prohibition. Restaurant, free wine tasting, grist mill featuring stone ground corn meal. Open year round, except holidays, Tuesday - Saturday 10-5.

Governor's Mansion — 300 E. Capital Street, Jackson, MS, 359-3175. Restored Greek Revival mansion, home of Mississippi's governors since 1842; collection of 19th century decorative arts. Open year round by appointment; Tuesday - Friday 9:30-11:30. Free.

The Old Court House Museum —

Court Square, Vicksburg, MS, 636-0741. Historical museum reflecting Southern heritage in 1858 Court House building. Open year round; Monday - Saturday 8:30-4:30, Sunday 1:30-4:30. Admission.



Vicksburg National Military Park —

Vicksburg, MS, 636-0583. Encompasses entire battlefield of Civil War Siege of Vicksburg and includes monuments and Visitors Center with museum displaying artifacts, dioramas and narrative film. Open year round; Monday - Sunday 8-5, June - August until 6. Free.

Wister Gardens — 1 mile north of Belzoni, MS. A beautiful estate open for your enjoyment year round.

Ethel Mohamed's Stitchery — 307 Central, Belzoni, MS. Call for appointment, 247-1433. Mrs. Mohamed has gained fame with her heirloom stitchery, and has work in the Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. and recently had reproductions made of one to be sold. Others not for sale.

Riverboat Excursions — The **Delta Queen** and the **Mississippi Queen** are authentic sternwheelers reminiscent of the riverboat era. These beautiful symbols of a bygone age are operated year round by the Delta Queen Steamboat Company, so all information concerning various cruise packages and schedules should be requested from your local travel agent or by contacting: Delta Queen Steamboat Company, 511 Main Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202, 1-800-543-1949.

The **Jefferson Davis Boat Cruise** offers narrative tours of the siege of Vicksburg as well as moonlight cruises on the Mississippi. These operate on a seasonal basis (mid-April through mid-September). For information and inquiries, contact: Jefferson Davis Boat Cruise, P.O. Box 664, Vicksburg, MS 39180, 636-9421.

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Silent

Night

by Judy Vernon

Illustration by Laura Ryder



Yokasta Sneed was born deaf and dumb. No doctor ever determined why. Indeed, that was not a very good question to ask in 1900, the year Yokasta was born. Her parents — kind, simple country people — did the best they could with her, and when she was eight years old, they sent her away to a school for the handicapped.

Except for Christmas visits home, Yokasta lived at the school for ten years. She learned to speak with her hands. She learned to read and write. Most importantly, she learned that there were many people like herself. Some were even worse off. Some people could not walk or take care of their bodies. Some of the children at the school were mentally retarded. Some were blind. Yokasta knew then how to appreciate her perfectly working eyes and mind and body.

She came home to her father's farm after she had graduated from high school, and there she learned to cope with people who had no handicaps. She wrote notes when she felt the need to "say" something. She worked in the fields and garden with her parents and brothers and sisters. She went to the country dances on Saturday night.

When she was twenty, she married a neighboring farmer's son. Yokasta taught him sign language, and this was perhaps the sweetest part of the courtship. Toby loved Yokasta dearly, and he was a good student. Once he wrote her a note which said:

"I have no voice, either, unless I can make you understand me."

They had one child, which died when it was only two months old. Despite the couple's lively sex life, no other children were ever

conceived.

Toby and Yokasta worked their sixty acres of cotton land together and made a decent and happy home. When Toby died, the sixty acres, or most of it, was sold by Yokasta. The widow Yokasta was content with her house, a small pasture, and garden. She and Toby had been married over fifty years.

Yokasta lived a life most Romantic poets claimed they would live if they could. She had a cow, and chickens, and a dog. She raised her own vegetables and made her own clothes and quilts. She ordered many books and read them over and over at night.

She never worked in a factory or learned to drive a car. She never heard a radio or watched television. The morning paper, which she always read, told her things were bad. But she knew this only because



Illustration by Laura Ryder

physical pain. True, her body was stiffer and slower than it had been. Yet nothing **hurt**. She had a family — a brother, nieces, nephews — but she never wanted to depend on them or anyone else. Perhaps God would be merciful and let her die in her sleep after a hard day in the garden.

So Yokasta lived alone for ten years and did become somewhat absent-minded. Her neighbors treated her kindly but knew her to be a little dotty. Her dottiness needed no defense, because she never harmed a soul.

Long before he died, Toby had gone to the trouble and expense of installing butane gas in the house. The fireplace was never used after that, and the old wood cookstove sat out in the corn crib. The big silver gas tank was, in Yokasta's old age, just something to mow around whenever she cut the grass. A serviceman from the gas company checked the fuel level regularly enough, and Yokasta's home was always warm in winter.

One very cold winter, however, Yokasta kept both heaters in the house burning night and day, and the serviceman did not come back soon enough. The gas ran out on a Saturday.

Saturday was Yokasta's day to go to town. A Dodge van, bought and paid for by the county, always came around to pick up the elderly and handicapped and take them to buy groceries. The van always came around one o'clock, and Yokasta was usually back home by six.

She noticed the house was getting cold about noon, and she went to look at the heaters. Neither was burning. Yokasta turned off the jets, put on her heavy coat, and walked a quarter of a mile down the road to Mr. Markum's house to ask him to come and check her heaters.

Mr. Markum was old, too, and he did not know anything about heaters — gas or otherwise. But he agreed to come and see if he could figure out what the matter was.

The van drove up just as Mr. Markum and Yokasta went in the house. The old man wrote a note telling Yokasta to go on — he would call somebody if he couldn't fix the problem himself. Yokasta went.

Mr. Markum tried to light the

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the morning paper said so. She lived apart from all the violence and noise of the machine age, and she did not think she had missed much of so-called "life." Yokasta had had Toby and loved him, and she missed him. But now she was content to be merely strong enough to live and do

for herself.


She was not afraid of dying, if death came quickly. She was, however, afraid of losing her mind first and having her body take its own time dying afterwards. Yokasta had worked hard all her life, but she had never known a great deal of

Vicksburg - 1974

In memory of Wyatt Cooper. Wyatt, sleep well.

Their legacy is silence.
Gray
Clouds and sky of clearest blue
Commemorate this day
And reverent crowds
Go strolling by
Their eager words
Echoing, yet somnolent the air.
Here a cannon
Pointed on a hill
Silhouettes the sleepy morning
Ever vigilant, yet ever still.
Do the sounds of soldiers dying
Mingled prayers and curses crying
Rebel yells and guns replying
In the hours far behind us
Still reverberate somewhere
Through another drowsy dawn?
No. Death's silence backward creeping
Falls on soldiers, vigil keeping
Quiets women numbed with weeping
And forever they are sleeping
All are sleeping
All are gone.

Nelle Harwell Richardson



Nelle Harwell Richardson is a wife and mother of five. She attended the University of Houston in Houston, Texas, and makes her home in Houston.

The Howling Dog

by Keith Hall, Jr.

Ah, ya hear it, huh? Kinda low and scary, ain't it? Sorta like a scared woman crying and such. Yes sir, it sure is scary, and I ain't afraid to say it. It plum gives me the shivers whenever I hear it, and I been hearing it every night for nigh onto three years now. Of course it's these quiet summer nights when everything's sort of silent and still that I really get the shivers. You kinda hope maybe he'll miss tonight

or die or something, but then every night. . . well. Yes sir, three years. Almost three years to the day — or night I guess's more accurate. Three years. Three years. What a night!

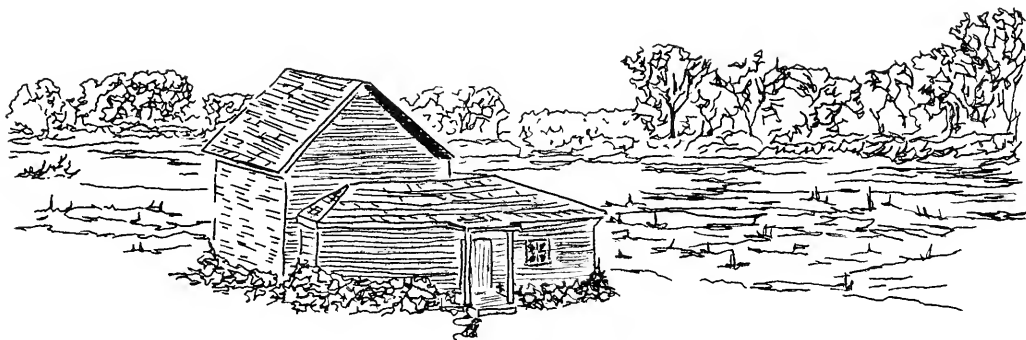
I don't ever think I'll forget that night, stranger, not in three years or thirty or ever. Of course, come to think of it, it was that howl that sorta started it all three years ago.

Now we all heard old Hank howl before, poor dog. Jacob Hensley

beat that poor hound every chance he got. Mean man, that Jacob Hensley. Real mean. Knock ya down as soon as look at ya. Mean streak wide as a barn and no saving graces at all. Kept mostly to himself and no wonder. Who'd go near him? Only came into town to get provisions and drink. . . oh my, lots of drink, then he was even meaner. Yes sir, he just stayed out on his farm near the marshes — just him and old Hank.

Poor old Hank. I guess Jacob really took his cussedness out on old Hank. Like I said, we always heard poor old Hank yelping and crying and we was sure Jacob Hensley was beating him, but what could we do? No, you city folk probably ain't got much feeling for an old hound like Hank, but us Delta people think of dogs as. . . like kin. It really riled a lot of us about the way old Jacob treated Hank, but none of us had the sand to mention it to him. No sir. He'd just love to pick a fight and stomp you. No sir. We just minded our own business.

But then one day Davy Tucker disappears. Davy was a nice fellow; had a farm at the other side of Hensley's place. Small farm, poor land really. But old Davy Tucker never complained. Real nice fellow, real nice. I had him in here lots of times. Sat right in that chair you're



Illustrations by Rea Taylor

sitting in now. Sat right in that chair drinking cider just before he disappeared.

I remember it just like it was yesterday. Davy stops by to show me his new boots, just had bought them. Real sturdy brown leather with them silver rings where the laces go. Mighty nice boots, especially since Davy didn't have much money to speak of. He saved and saved for a real long time to buy them. So he drops in on the way back from town to show me. Well, we had us some cider to celebrate (I make it myself), and Davy says he'd better get going or his missus might wonder what he's up to. So off he goes and nobody ever sees him again; at least that's going to admit it, anyway.

Well, about suppertime I get a call from Davy's missus asking if Davy's here or been by. I tell her he left here hours ago, and she gets all upset and crying that Davy's late, and where could he be, and raising such a fuss that I tell her I'll see if I can find him. And here it was suppertime too.

So I start out. I don't see no sign of Davy and I look real good. Believe me, I got the sharpest eyes in the county and when I say there weren't no sign of him, there weren't.

Then I come to Jacob Hensley's place. I sure didn't look forward to the prospect of speaking to his likes, but I promised Davy's missus I'd find Davy so I set my jaw and knocked on Hensley's door.

I could hear poor old Hank whining after I knocked. Always whining. Then I hear Jacob barking himself, "Shuddup," he yells at Hank. "Shuddup." Then I hear a bang like he threw something at the poor old dog. Then the door bangs open and there stands Jacob Hensley, drunk as a skunk and mean as the Devil. I could tell he didn't feel like socializing — his eyes all glassy and his mouth all twisted up in a mean growl. His body was rocking like a boat, and he had to hold onto the door to keep himself up.

"What you want?" he thunders at me.

Well, I sort of backs up a little since I know it don't do to mess with old Jacob when he's been drinking. I just back up a mite and

tells him I'm looking for Davy Tucker who's missing.

"Ain't seen him," he grumbles real nasty-like. "And I ain't going to see him anymore."

I mention that Davy must have come by this way since he was going home from my place, but old Jacob gets even madder.

"He didn't come this way, you old fogy. Now get your tail off my place before I kick it off myself. Go on. Get."

Old Jacob, he tried to kick at me then but he was so drunk his feet just went out from under him, and back he falls onto his backsides. Boy, was it funny! I might have even laughed at old Jacob, as ornery as he was, except then is when I saw them boots: Davy's boots, the ones with the silver rings. And Jacob Hensley's wearing them!

"What you looking at?" he bellows trying to get up. "Get out! Get out!"

Well, he was trying to get back on his feet, so I hightails it back here to do some thinking and some waiting, hoping maybe something'll happen like Davy's turning up, and me seeing I was all wrong. But nothing happens for three days. No sign of Davy or nothing. Mrs. Tucker really started fretting, and search parties started looking, trying to find Davy or a sign of him, but I knew they wouldn't find nothing because I'd seen Jacob Hensley wearing Davy's boots which meant just one thing: Davy's body was probably at the bottom of some bog hole on Jacob's farm where nobody ever would find it because Jacob Hensley knew those Delta marshes like the back of his hand.

So after three days I knew what I had to do. As much as I sure didn't want to lock no horns with old Jacob, I just couldn't set still and let him get away with no killing, especially killing somebody like Davy. I had to convince myself a dozen times over to do it, but I took some cider then calls up the sheriff and tells him what I seen.

And before long, in comes the sheriff and his deputies, and I get them all some cider and tells them what I seen all over again. We was all gulping down the cider pretty fast because none of us thought tangling with Jacob Hensley would be much fun.

Then we heard it. That low moaning howl. Just like you just heard it, but louder, wilder — real painful. Right then you could just feel something... peculiar was up. When you live near the marshes like we do, you kinda get a feeling, sorta like the hair on the back of your neck standing on end, and you smell trouble in the air. I don't think there was a one of us that didn't feel it. We all knew it was coming from Jacob's farm, and so we didn't really look forward to going over there. But the sheriff kept pushing us along and we got to Hensley's farm, but not real quick-like, if you know what I mean.

It was dark and quiet. I mean real dark and quiet on the farm. Just that sad, painful howl coming from old Hank who was tied to the porch. He'd howl and howl and howl, then stop to chew on his leash kinda trantic-like, then howl and howl and howl.

Jacob's house was dark and still, and the front door was wide open, so the sheriff said we'd go in and get Jacob. Maybe he'd be asleep and we could take him real easy. And if Jacob weren't home, we'd wait for him and take him by surprise when he came back.

The sheriff went in first and we all followed real quiet-like because we were afraid maybe old Jacob was

Continued on page 24



THE MESSAGE

by Don Kerr

"The message came from above," he wrote in his diary and then paused, frowning. A cockroach raced across the table in front of him but he ignored it.

He had more important things on his mind than cockroaches. He had history on his mind — his place in it.

He crossed out "above" and wrote "God." Because, of course, if it came from above, it had to come from God. God was above. His mother had told him that when he was small, a long time ago.

"The message was clear," he continued in the diary he had been keeping meticulously since his release from the mental institution. "Not like past messages, with a thousand voices babbling a thousand different orders. One voice. One clear voice. 'Go to the square. Shoot the president!'"

He stopped writing and looked out the window. The window was filthy. The room was filthy. His life was filthy. But by tonight everyone would know his name. The whole filthy world would know his name.

Would Jayne be sorry?

The view out the window wasn't very inspiring. It was the side of a dirty brick building, across a narrow alley.

He got up and went to the window and lifted it up. The foul smell of garbage from over-full cans drifted up from the alley. He looked down. A drunk staggered up from where he had spent the night and stumbled toward the street. An empty bottle rolled across the alley in his wake.

It wasn't a very pretty world. But he could have made it if Jayne hadn't shunned him.

Jayne had been a worker at the

**"Go to the square,"
he heard the
message again. . .**

hospital. She had brought him out of his depression, revived his interest in life. She was a warm, loving, caring person.

He thought she had been in love with him. Then one day he heard her telling a fellow worker that she was quitting. Her **husband** had gotten a job in another city.

She didn't love him at all. It was just a job to her.

But she would be sorry. He had incriminated her in his diary. How would she explain that to her husband?

Filthy world.

It was raining. That was good. The crowd would be down. He needed to be close, so that he could get a clear shot at the president.

He lit a cigarette. His hands were shaking slightly. He must control his nerves. This was a crucial day in the history of the world and he must not fail his role in it.

"Go to the square," he heard the message again, loud and clear, coming from the center of the sky. He stiffened in anticipation of the rest of it. "Shoot the president."

He stood for a moment, waiting for more, but that was it. He puffed on the cigarette, looked at his watch. Eleven. The president was to speak in an hour.

The presses of newspapers were already rolling with the words of that speech, pre-released to meet deadlines, but it would never be uttered. They'd have to tear up their front pages, replate the presses in a frenzy of rewriting. He would cause a lot of frenzy today.

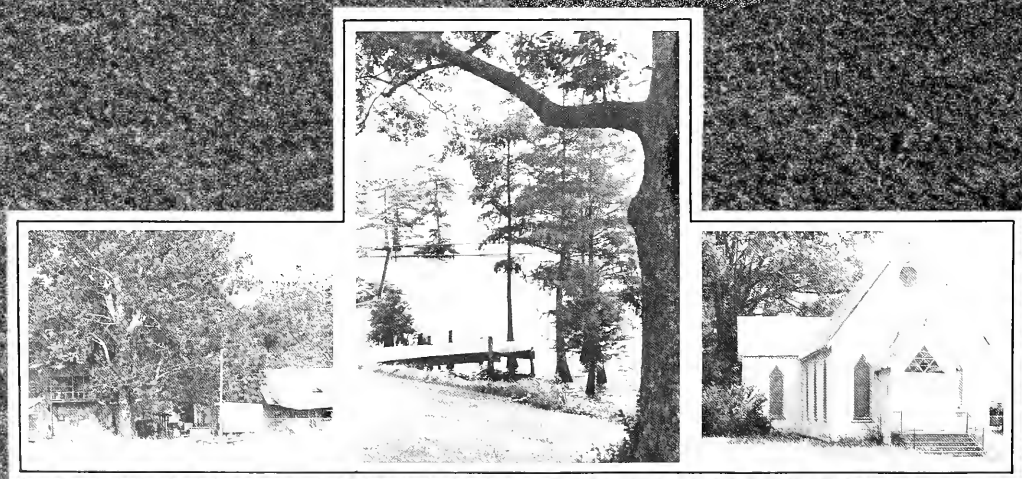
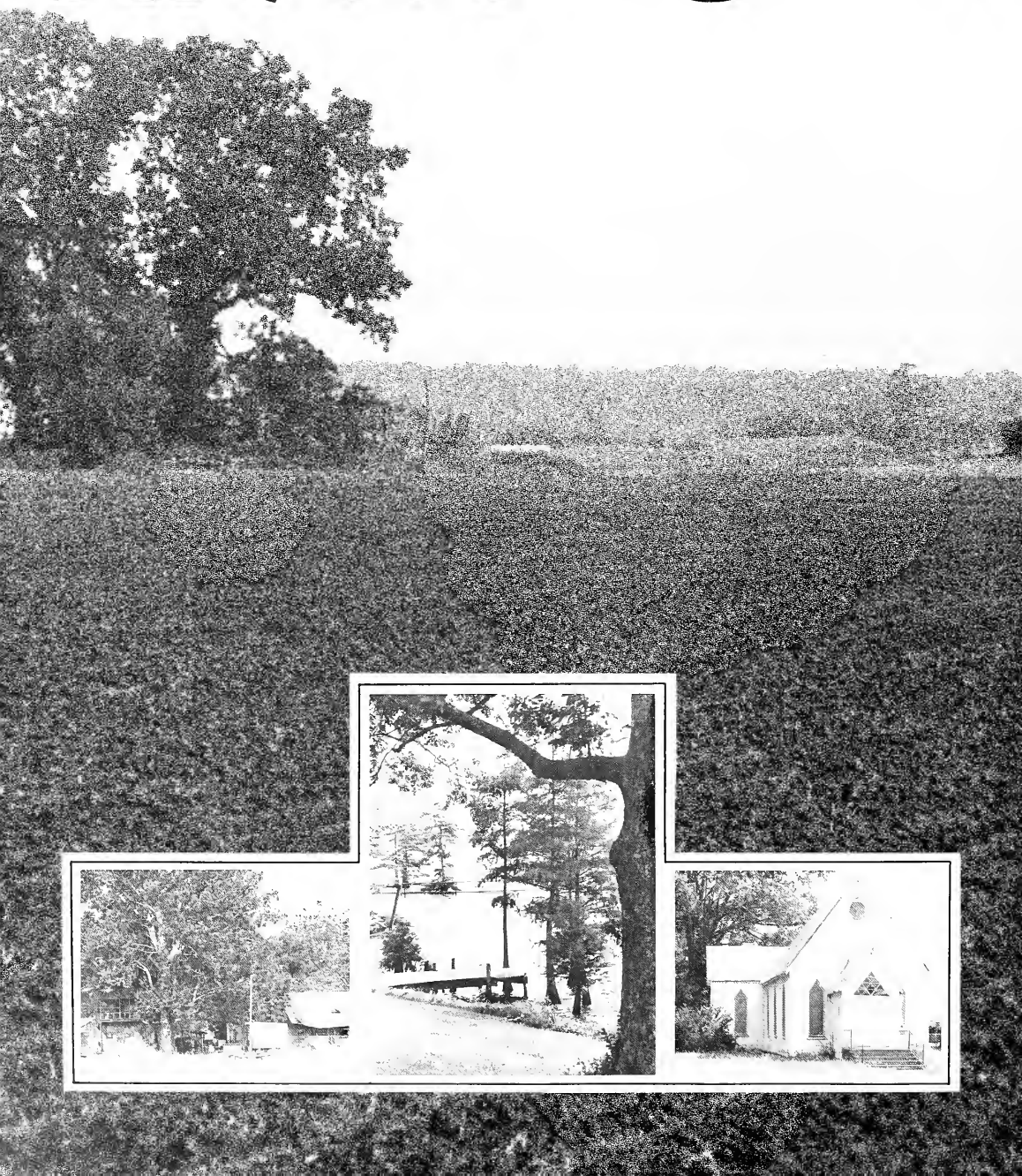
He stubbed out the cigarette, went across to the table, looked down at the open diary. He closed it. Should he take it with him?

No. He'd leave it here. They would find it tonight, or tomorrow,

Continued on page 26



The RIVER ROAD





The following pictorial essay is the result of a recent undertaking by Virginia Rayner.

As she points out, that area of Mississippi Highway 1 (known as the River Road) which stretches from Onward in the south to Greenville (and farther north) is certainly one of the most scenic drives in the Delta. In fact, in a popular national road atlas, Highway 1 is the only designated "scenic drive" in Mississippi besides the Natchez Trace. Enjoy this scenery as it is captured in Virginia's commentary and lovely photographs. — Editor's Note



2

The River Road, or Highway 1, is undoubtedly the most interesting drive through the Delta. Sections still seem to be part of the past as the road meanders around fields or the levee. It commands a slower pace and a savoring of the surroundings. The mind may block the sight of five mammoth machines moving

through the field of endless straight rows in front of the old mule barn. Visions recalling mules working the land without such long or straight rows are much more vivid than reality.

A mysticism covers the River Road due to the magnetism and romance of the River which brought the

earliest migrants to the Delta. This narrow band bordering the River was first settled 75 to 100 years earlier than the major portion of the Delta. A few structures, dating from the 1830s, still survive. The small town of Mayersville, hardly noticed today, was once a riverport that surpassed even Natchez in the quality of the cotton it shipped. And Glen Allan, on the east shore of beautiful Lake Washington, is the site of some of the Delta's loveliest old homes.

5.

6.





3.



4.

4.) Mount Holly, north of Glen Allan, is a very fine example of Italianate architecture. It was built by Margaret and Charles Erwin during the 1850's. The brick was probably made on "the place" and that at the front entrance was made in rounded forms rather than being cut to fit.

5.) Flocks of martins attest to the large number of mosquitoes in this area of the Delta.

6.) The Laws House is located on old Highway 1 opposite the sailing club on Lake Washington.

7.) The "Mississippi Mule," once an all-important part of farming in the Delta, has now vanished (or been banished) from the landscape.

8.) The finish of the library bookcase was carefully applied with feathers and paper to cypress imitating birds' eye maple, a very popular wood of the period, but unavailable locally.

1.) Metal dinosaurs and other creatures inhabit an area at Bobo's Ceramics just north of Onward on Highway 61.

2.) The Onward Store with its paintings on both sides is an old landmark at the 3-way intersection of Highway 1 and 61.

3.) View of Greenfield Cemetery through a gaping Gothic arch in the ruins of St. John's Episcopal Church south of Glen Allan. The church was constructed prior to the Civil War. The lead from the stained glass windows was removed to use as bullets during the war, then were replaced following the war.

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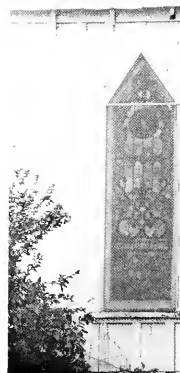


Above Left. A wrought iron fence with this arch surrounds Greenfield Cemetery and the ruins of St. John's destroyed by a tornado in the early 1900's.

Above Right. The Onward Store with its paintings on both sides is an old landmark at the 3-way intersection of Highway 1 and 61.

Left: New products in old spaces.

Below. The proprietor of the Onward Store checks incoming mail surrounded by turn of the century counters and shelving.



Right: Antique stained glass window is beautiful detail of the Methodist Church at Mayersville.

Virginia Rayner is a noted Delta photographer from Cleveland. Also, she is a Media Specialist at Delta State University.



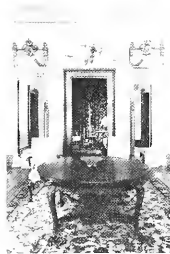
Above: Mount Holly is located on Highway 1 just north of Glen Allan. It is being restored to preserve the elegance of the past it represents.

Left: The stately columns of Linden, completed in 1914, frame a view of live oaks and Lake Washington.

Right: Mount Holly's interior is rich in architectural detail such as the heavy ceiling molding and wall niches in the entrance hall. The pair of pier mirrors and brass gaslight, found in New Orleans by Ann and T.C. Wood, the present owners, restore the elegance of the past to the home.

Lower Left: Elaborately carved chest (probably from Europe) and ornate gas light fixture enhance the landing to the front stairway at Mount Holly. The back stairs are located at rear as seen through the doorway. Brick walls on either side of the back stairwell serve as a fire protection between the kitchen and the rest of the house.

Lower Right: Handsome fireplace located in the unfurnished parlor of Mount Holly.





Today I Saw A Butterfly Walking

Today I saw a butterfly walking,
Tasting the flowers with her feet.
She opened and closed her wings, sighing.
I envied her freedom.
The way she walked,
Birds singing around her orange riddles.

But in the end a stubborn poet like myself
Was more fortunate,
I knew that some old apple tree
Would take her by a thousand fingers
While I could write her walking. . .
And let beauty go. . .

by Marion Schoeberlein

heaters and could not. It had occurred to him on the way over that the tank simply might be out of fuel. He went out and checked. Sure enough, that was it. Mr. Markum drove back home and ordered gas for Yokasta's tank.

Mr. Markum had accidentally left the gas jets open, however: how is one to know if the gas is "on" or "off" if no gas is coming out?

The service man came out and filled up the tank.

Yokasta arrived home about 5:30. Remembering that she had no gas when she left home, she wrote a note asking the van driver if he would check her heaters before he left. If she still had no heat, she would have to spend the night at her brother's house. The driver said sure. Yokasta sat in the warm van and waited.

She felt rather than heard the explosion. The first and only thing she saw was the driver rolling on the ground, trying to put out his burning clothes. Yokasta, for the first and last time in her life, tried to scream. But the noise merely burst through her own brain: no one else heard. She did not see that that kitchen wall no longer was; she did not see the billowing smoke.

She awoke in the hospital four days later. A sickly-looking brown tube was feeding glucose into her right arm. She could not feel the needle, but she didn't think about that at the moment.

Her brother's wife Margaret was there. Yokasta made a motion with her left arm, and Margaret came to her instantly and rang for the nurse. Then she held Yokasta's hand until the doctor came.

The first pain Yokasta felt was hunger. Then she remembered the explosion. She tried to raise her right arm, but it would not move. Margaret understood, and wrote on a piece of paper:

"The driver was badly burned on one shoulder. Your house was not very much damaged."

This last was not quite the truth; however, Margaret sensed that this wasn't the time to upset Yokasta. But Yokasta was already crying.

There were no straps on her arm: her right arm: her writing arm.

The stroke had paralyzed her

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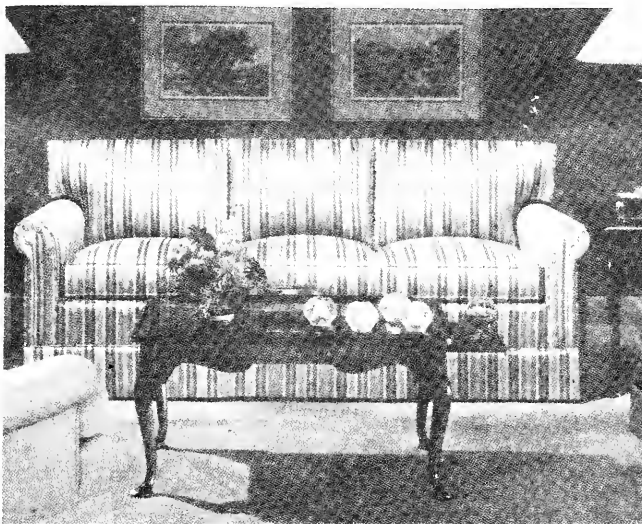


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right side. She knew, too, at her age that rehabilitation would be almost impossible. She would never sew again, or pick tomatoes, or tighten the lids of freshly canned preserves. She would not write, either. How was that, when she still had so much to say?

Eventually she felt a little better and was permitted to eat. Margaret or Margaret's daughters fed her some pabulum-like substance with a spoon. Yokasta ate it: how could she protest?

Nurses bathed her and brought the bedpan when she rang. Some member of her family was always in the room at other times. Yokasta watched these people with no more interest than she felt in the motions on the other patient's television screen. She spent her time trying to make her awkward left arm perform the motion of writing.

Her first recognizable message was one word long — one word scrawled in crooked block letters: "Home?" it said. She flashed this at the doctor when he made his rounds.

The doctor turned and spoke to Margaret, who came and wrote on

the tablet:

"He doesn't know yet. We'll have to wait and see."

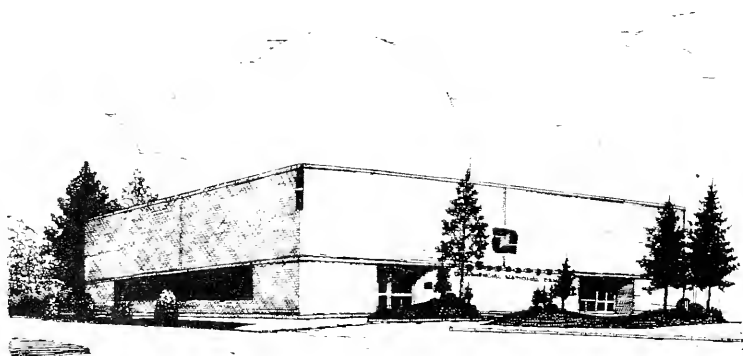
Later, her brother Howard made his usual nightly visit and wrote her a long message explaining that the house was very badly damaged. She could not live there now, in any case. She needn't worry, though: they would take care of her.

Yokasta looked at her brother, who was only five years younger than herself, and wondered who would take care of whom. Margaret was in her late sixties and not in terribly good health. They barely got along themselves. How should that take care of **her**?

Yokasta closed her eyes and wished for death. She was glad she had not seen her home in shambles. She never wanted to see it now. If she was to live now, so partly alive, why didn't her sight and mind go, too? The Lord could not be very merciful if he let her feel such pain and emptiness when there was no hope of things ever being any better. Yokasta prayed to die.

When her prayers did not work, Yokasta did not cease to believe in God, she simply decided that she

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had not put her total will into the matter. Then she resolved to die.

After two days of solid food, Yokasta refused to eat. The doctor understood what she was doing and ordered the glucose bottle brought back in. Yokasta nodded "no," but the nurse paid no attention.

Everyday they brought her food, and she refused to eat it. The glucose kept her alive, but that was all. On the tenth day after her resolution to die, her bladder collapsed, and the nurse installed a catheter. Yokasta's eyes burned out at all these bothersome people and she tried not to hate them. She knew not to lose her mind in that way, at least. She simply nodded when Howard wrote her a note telling her that what she was doing was wrong.

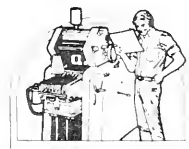
Soon afterwards, she began to lose consciousness periodically. Where she went was worth not eating for. It was not Heaven, for she saw Toby again as he had been as a young man. They talked to each other in real voices; she could hear the voice she had never once heard.

She and Toby were always seated

by the fire, just the two of them. There was no cold or hard labor where she saw and heard Toby now. It was always night, the best time they had spent together. Always she felt her body young and strong and warm. Curtains were drawn against the cold night outside. Toby's hand held her own, and he spent all his time telling her things he could not tell her on tablets or even with his hands, the sign language he had so diligently learned.

Yokasta fought consciousness as she would have fought any strange enemy who came to destroy the loveliness of the room where she and Toby talked. Soon she knew that the enemy would not come again, and she was glad. She cried and smiled by turns — cried because no sound had ever been, smiled because no sound had ever been as beautiful as Toby's voice in the room where the fire burned.

Judy Vernon has received a B.A. in psychology and a M.A. in English from Memphis State University, and is at the A.B.D. level in English from the University of Arkansas. She is presently self-employed as a writer and is from Smithville, MS.



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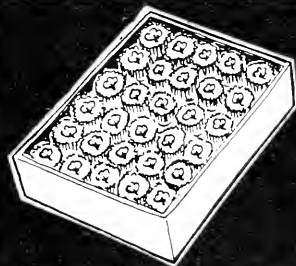
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Didn't take long to see why poor old Jacob was bleeding so bad. His feet was tore off, completely gone. Never turned up ever, and we looked all over. Something had just come into Jacob Hensley's house and took them boots off old Jacob.

[illegible]

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feet and all, leaving old Jacob there in his kitchen to bleed to death. A real awful way to go, but I didn't see nobody crying no tears of anguish for the recently departed.

Of course we all had our ideas as to what happened that night but the only one who could know for sure was poor old Hank. But he lit out as soon as we untied him like he was being chased by a wild demon. And he just stays out there, howling and moaning, probably because he saw whatever he saw.

Now, don't think I'm a little crazy if I think that Davy Tucker came back to reclaim his new boots from him who stole them. Like I said before, when you live out here near the marshes, you get a feeling for them things. Anyhow, justice was done.

There. Old Hank's finally settled down. Poor critter. Guess the poor thing's going to finally get some sleep. No reason why I can't do the same now. See you in the morning, stranger. Pleasant dreams.

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and it would add to his story, keeping it on the front pages.

Later, they'd interview that slut, Jayne. She'd be sorry. . .

He put on the faded red coat. He had carefully chosen that coat from the Goodwill store to wear for today's occasion. Wearing a red coat, with his blond hair, he'd stand out on television. For his moment on the stage of history, he wanted everything to be perfect.

He opened the drawer in the desk and removed the revolver. The coldness of the metal in his hand calmed him. **I can do this**, he thought. **I can do this easy**.

He stuck the revolver in the deep pocket of the red coat and went out into the hall where his nose was assaulted by the sour smells that permeate the halls of transient, derelict hotels.

He walked down the stairs and out into the gray drizzle. He would walk to the square, he decided. It was only seven or eight blocks away. He could see his breath in the frosty air as he trudged toward his dark rendezvous with destiny.

He hadn't thought much about the man he was going to kill. He had nothing against the president. He was killing him because God told him to. And Jayne would be sorry.

Perhaps God would stop him at the square. Maybe this was just a test of faith, like Abraham was tested when he was told to take and burn his son as a sacrifice to God, and then, at the last moment, sent a ram to substitute for the boy.

Perhaps God would send Jayne to the square to tell him not to kill the president. In that way God would save him, Jayne, and the president.

The Lord works in strange ways.

But if no one came to dissuade him then he would fulfill his mission in life and join Booth and Oswald in the history books. At least, he would leave a mark.

People would know who he was. He would forever shed his anonymity when he pumped the bullets into the president. They'd write books about him. They'd make movies.

They'd tell the world what a slut Jayne was.

He had reached the square. He worked his way through the thin crowd to a roped-off area which the

president was to walk through to reach the speaker's platform.

The rain had ceased. A band was playing. He noticed with approval the numerous television cameras and newspaper photographers on hand. He'd be instantly famous in a few more minutes.

A little film of perspiration beaded his brow. He fingered the revolver in the deep pocket of his red coat. He must not fail.

A woman, holding a baby, stood next to him. He'd shove her aside before shooting the president, to get her and the child out of harm's way. He didn't want innocent people hurt.

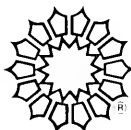
This was just between him and the president — and God — and that slut, Jayne.

There was a commotion at the hotel entrance, bright lights of TV cameras, and then the president, smiling and waving, walked out.

The president was well surrounded, but he was a tall man, who stood head and shoulders over his protectors.

He watched the president draw near. He gripped the revolver in his coat pocket. **I can do this**, he

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thought, giving him a thrill of joy.

He shoved the woman with the baby aside and pulled the revolver out, all in one motion, as the president drew abreast of him, looking the other way, waving.

But, as he leveled the pistol to fire, a strong arm grabbed his hand and forced the arm straight up.

The shot went harmlessly into the air. Secret servicemen and police piled on him, knocking him down, smothering him.

With a sickening feeling in his stomach, he knew he had failed.

But what was even more sickening was the voice of the man who had stopped him, who had forced his arm skyward so the deadly bullet spent itself in harmless flight rather than in the president's heart.

"I had a message," the man was screaming, hysterically. "I had a message from God. It said, 'Go to the square. Stop the man in the red coat from shooting the president!'"

Don Kerr attended the Ohio University and makes his home in Cleveland, Ohio.



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Book Review

Womenfolks: Pattern of Our Past, Fabric of Our Future

by Rebecca Hood-Adams

The lights of Central Park played upon the antique quilt on the wall. In a modern apartment with its oversized chrome and glass coffee table, the old fabric was a touchstone. The pink and brown squares pieced by lamp light now glowed in reflected neon tones. Tiny stitches — precise and dainty and sturdy enough to withstand a century — whispered in the darkening room. Here were stories to be told.

Last October, New York agent Susan Protter and I shared literary gossip over mounds of take-out Chinese food. Shrimp in lobster sauce tempered marketing lessons which choked this neophyte novelist. What's hot; what's not. . . What the average reader wants. The "average" reader, I thought sourly, thumbs through mindless paperbacks in between MTV videos. Bathtub books where the heroine **always** tosses her raven locks over her creamy white shoulders. I savaged a pea pod and wondered if hari-kari were possible with chopsticks.

Then the quilt caught my eye. I remembered a conversation I'd had five years ago with revered Southern novelist Walker Percy. When prodded about the future of American fiction, Percy had singled out Southern women writers.

There was logic behind his prophecy. One must be outside society to accurately observe it.

Historically, the South stands beyond the pale of mainstream America. Women are further outsiders in our male-oriented community. Protter added black to the list of exclusions offering a different perspective on society. Her judgment was evidenced in the selection by the Pulitzer committee of Alice Walker for **The Color Purple**.

Women purchase and read most of the fiction published today. Even beyond stereotypical romances and Gothics, many of the big names in publishing currently have a feminine lilt. Helen Hooven Santmyer's. . . **And The Ladies Of The Club** was the blockbuster of 1984. Whether your taste ran to Erma Bombeck's housewife humor or Judith Rossner's biting analytical tale of modern angst, a woman wrote the story.

My desk is piled with book's I've been considering for this column. **The Salt Line**, Mississippian Elizabeth Spencer's masterful novel set on the Gulf Coast. **Black Tickets**, West Virginian Jayne Anne Phillips' darkly disturbing collection of short stories. The sassy, wickedly funny **Six Of One** by Floridian Rite Mae Brown.

Like the brightly colored cloth of Susan Protter's quilt, women are piecing together the fabric of society and stitching stories which speak to our times. Women recognize the connections between

past and present in a way unique to those who have traditionally been preservers of our lineage. Passing down Great-Grandmother Hinson's recipe for buttermilk pie has more to do with heritage than culinary expertise. Here was a woman who believed in transformation. Plain ingredients into party fare.

Substantial enough to feed nine children. Always served when the preacher came to dinner. The flour-specked recipe teaches pride in accomplishment, however small or routine. Down through the years, the blue ribbon from the county fair got lost. But the sense of achievement was retained by women's fingers who sought value and excellence even when the larder was low. These are your people, the recipe says. Can you measure up?

Womenfolks: Growing Up Down South by Arkansan Shirley Abbott is a celebration of ancestry, a map for the daughters of Dixie who have been trapped in the Scarlett O'Hara/Melanie Wilkes mythology of ideal Southern womanhood.

Examining her Scotch-Irish pioneer roots, Abbott discusses women who "were carriers and conservators of a culture of their own, one that I would have to unravel one day and reknit."

Childhood afternoons spent in dusty cemeteries as her mother and aunt weeded graves and mused over kin taught Abbott the worth of



Shirley Abbott, author of *WOMENFOLKS*.

Photo by Bill Bangham

family connections. "Second cousins thrice removed mattered. We know — and thriftily made use of — everybody's middle name. We knew who was buried where. We all mattered."

Although she cut her teeth on the Iron Magnolia heroines of Southern novels, Abbott ultimately found greater pride in the reality of her own backwood ancestry. The rural Southern woman, too often dismissed as cracker, was the backbone of *real* society. Cavaliers and their ladies were the stuff of storybooks. But the truth of farm women who made do and moved on, literally "migrating across the South generation by generation — from a rock to a hard place" presents heroines worth emulating.

"I grew up believing," writes Abbott, "that a woman might pose as garrulous and talky and silly and dotty, but at heart she was a steely, silent creature, with secrets no man would ever know, and she was always — always — stronger than any man. ("Now you don't have to let on about it," my mother would advise.) I never learned to construe the female sex as downtrodden or disadvantaged. I grew up under the hegemony of a line of magnificent women — strong women with an ancient pedigree, who adhered to a code of honor, who oversaw my conduct, who held (and still hold) me responsible for my actions."

As this Hot Springs daughter searches for her matrilineal origins, I think you'll find haunting taproots of your own family's history. I'll bet you had an aunt like "Frances, who refuses to sit down until everyone else has eaten" or attended a Decoration Day where the congregation of homefolks read the list of that year's dead. Maybe you grew up in the city, but you'll hear the heart's truth in Abbott's description of rural reunions:

"You learned to love your own and mistrust foreigners, but you tried if possible to make everybody your own, seeking kinship bonds with any and all comers, trying by whatever means to connect yourself with the rest of humanity, raking up ancestral names ("Now, Great-Aunt Addie was a Holloway"), uncovering the secret network of cousinship."

As Abbott weaves her chain of

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remembrance, we are admitted not just to her family's history, but to the heritage of all strong Southern women who searched "for cheap land and sweet water and the chance to start over again."

Womenfolks (Ticknor & Fields) prods your sense of family and challenges the reader into evaluating his or her own cultural inheritance. Most Southerners would echo Abbott's "conviction that the past matters, that history weighs on us and refuses to be forgotten by us, and that the worst poverty women — or men — can suffer is to be bereft of their past."

Abbott offers her readers — particularly the women — a great gift. Her book is well-written and splendidly crafted. You'll remember the beautiful imagery in the chapter "Drowned Women" long after the last page is turned. Moreover, **Womenfolks** projects a different type of role model. The myth of the Southern belle is a fractured mirror for the mature woman. We've all seen the pathetically aging belle, desperate to hang on to the power of flirtation and manipulation through tossed curls. How much better to offer our daughters the flesh and blood strength of their Southern pioneer ancestors. A recipe for buttermilk pie is useful long after the sheen wears thin on a satin ball gown.

The book is not without its problem. The editorial oversight placing Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie" in Chicago rather than St. Louis undermines otherwise excellent scholarship. And the reader may find **Womenfolks** not all of one piece. The academic may label it "pop" history and thereby disregard its value. The lay reader may be burdened by statistics or citations from noted Southern historians C. Vann Woodward and Wilbur Cash. The feminist may find it too mild; the Total Woman, too radical.

But that is the beauty of Shirley Abbott's **Womenfolks**. Like an old quilt, it's colorful and varied and practical and best of all — it keeps you warm.

Rebecca Hood-Adams received her Master's degree in English from Delta State University and her B.A. in journalism from Memphis State University. Ms. Hood-Adams has had several articles published including her collection of verse, Biscuit Soppin' Blues.

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